Spectrum2012
A LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE

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ALYSON COCKRELL

Flora Dreams

EVE LANGLEY

6 A.M.
Roses the shade of thoroughly kissed lips and bubblegum
bloom across the sky,
giving way to the glowing mother blossom
chasing away the darkness.
Oh but to be back in the security of the royal sky
and the comfort of the anti-light.

Turn past the hours
til the time of mourning brides,
where tucked beneath a lilac–petaled sky
with shimmering pollen clusters intertwined,
rested upon hands furled together
slumbers the head that knows only safety.
The shadows play upon bedroom walls
mimicking the stories being dreamt
of knights being slain by monsters
whilst the monsters rescue the damsels
from the mine fields of Overlord Society.

Darkness spews from the sleeping child's nostrils
and blankets our hero with pitch warmth.
Snuggled in the night
a chasm of comfort
in the realm
of Violas.
2 A.M.

Plenty of Fish in the Sea

EVE LANGLEY

They say there are plenty of fish in the sea
that you just have to keep searching,
but I've been from Pacific to Atlantic and back again
with nothing but a hole in my net.

I caught a lion fish once.
He was proud and regal
carrying his beautiful red stripes,
yet his poisoned spines struck out
and his flashiness blinded my eyes.
So back to the sea he went.

I spotted a coral reef next.
She had gathered fish all around her
decorating her in a neon rainbow.
But you can't love what you can't reach
and she had barricaded herself to an impermeable level.
Thus on I went across the seas.

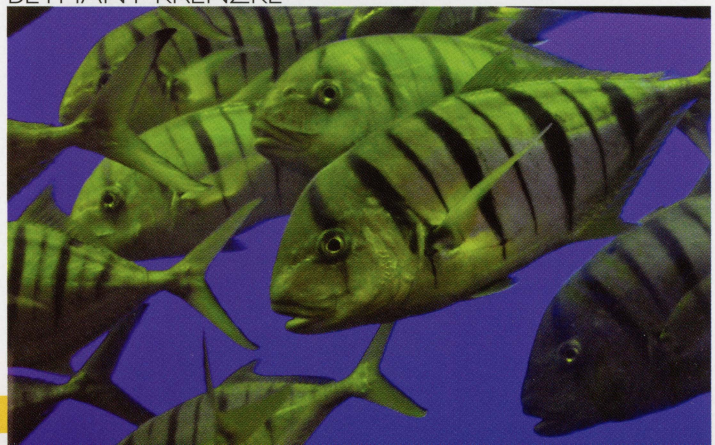
I even captured a bull shark for a while.
He was glorious in dimension
all muscle and sinew from nose to tail.
However, his appetite was exponential,
devouring all in his sight
with teeth set to rip and chomp.
Mostly intact, I set him free.

I have come full global
with nothing to show
except for calloused fingers
and hook piercings.
The worst part of all
even if there are plenty of fish in the sea
I'm deathly allergic.

SHERIE JONES

RUTHIE EDWARDS

BETHANY KRENZKE



NHU NGUYEN

CAITLIN SZILVASSY

SHYLA SAUTER

[Untitled]

JASON VAN SLYKE

Fresh out the gate and we're gunned down
Corpses kicked
spat on and pissed
But don't worry, urine
Disinfects the wounds.

REBECCA HUYNH

En Pointe

SARAH WARRENFELTZ

Piano keys release
tiny beads of intonation into the studio. With fingers
carefully relaxed, the ballerina allows the beads
to glide over her hand and down her arm,
to collect as sweat on the back of her neck.

As she makes a combré à la droite,
the beads shimmer down her opposite arm.

Circling en dedans,
she inhales life as she bends back
and exhales tension as she rounds to the front;
her head relaxes below her knees.

Straightening, she crafts bourrés
in a circle, her right arm arched
above her head as her guide. The soft
tip-tap of papier-mâché on wood gives
a more urgent tone to the petit-allegro.

Her fingers swirl the bright music beads through the air;
her precise feet accentuate the rhythm;
and she knows that
as long as someone plays Dvorak's "Humoresque,"
she has a reason to smile.

Letters from a Cannibal

ASHLEY FERGUSON

I plucked, ripped, and twisted her ocher skin,
each drop of tangy flesh leading us down
into lost sanity and old glitter.
Her legs fell, tortured by sunlight, her warmth
a tease of approval meeting my print.
I glazed her bubbling youth with myth and rhyme,
passion and keys, knowing no grind of teeth.
She took for granted the navy quiet.
As morning took a bite of the darkness,
She rose, clumsy, vacuous, but alive.
Now mirror holds her skin tight and flaming.
Memory led to no neat conclusion,
and while light escaped her thighs, I questioned
the sweat of pink meat behind copper doors.

KATIE FERSCH

Between the Fissure of a Mountain

JUSTIN POE

I'm the bitter of your love
Because you love in earnest
The sting at the break of skin
You love not as you say

Your burning breath brushes my cheek
And I do not blush
The songs you sing, they mean to me
Now nothing

Once your silk gown was my bed sheet
And your hair was warmth to my skin
We have lost the dawn when we greeted
Each other simply with "good morning"

Amid the mountains, darkness
Shadows of figures indiscernible are one
A void deep the path
I'll never reach you if you're walking

You in the valley see so far
I hope you remember me in the distance

Companion Poems

ASHLEY FERGUSON

Part 1

I will choke you with this poem.

This verse? It will tear your memoirs to baby tiny pieces,
Too small for your vacillating fingers to pick up.

You're going to nightmare the sentence,
Unable to subtract from your mashed up, squashed up, cracked up cerebrum.

A word was only a word until I turned it to a threat.

I will undoubtedly massacre the lines you hold dear,
For scrap metal, for bird droppings… useless, wasteful space.

The abortions of your doggerel lend me to riotous moves,
Until I calm the palate with a knock-back and the sigh of John Keats.

I implore you: cease and desist. With flies in your ears,
Neither leaflet nor mouth will accept your name and your act,
As anything more than a littering of black on white.

Part 2

I will save you with this poem.

These lines will put all the baby tiny pieces back to you.
Cement those old-fashioned eyelids for good-lookin' little dreams of modest enthusiasts.

Uplift the crown of your toes in poetic stimulation,
Craft your verses into love, dejection, and the generic nothings
Everyone aims to plant on virgin parchment, but no one is able to snatch.

You're going to replace idle words with the toiling, sweating, hustling.
I will lock sultry lips with silent criticism; let these hopes fill your balloons.

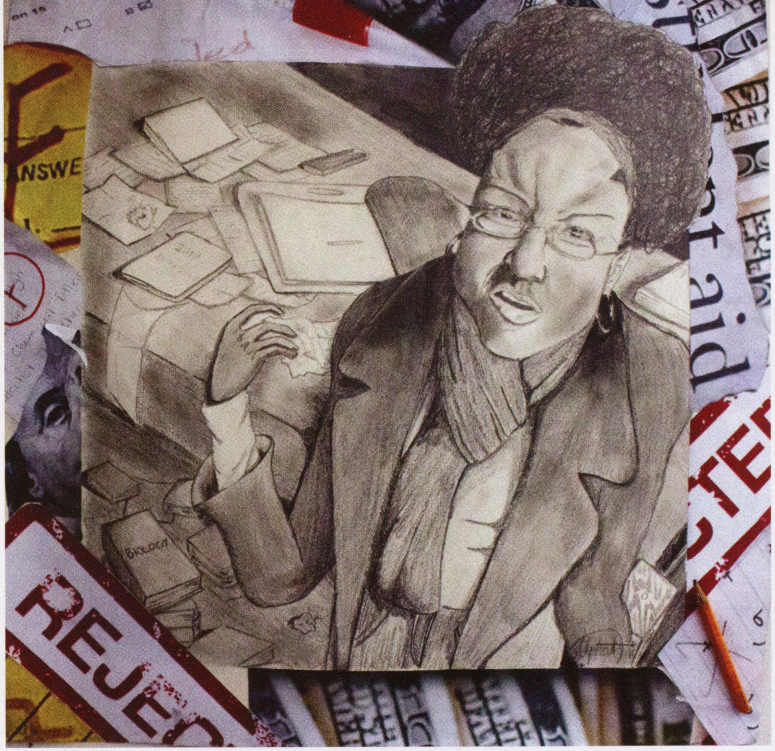
I implore you: birth and ripen what you left dead and rotten.
This art is not to be fondled, nor cast in departure under steps and cradles.

Love it like you loved that piece of ass, and maybe one day
You can join me at my table and feast on the language you once emaciated.

Heron

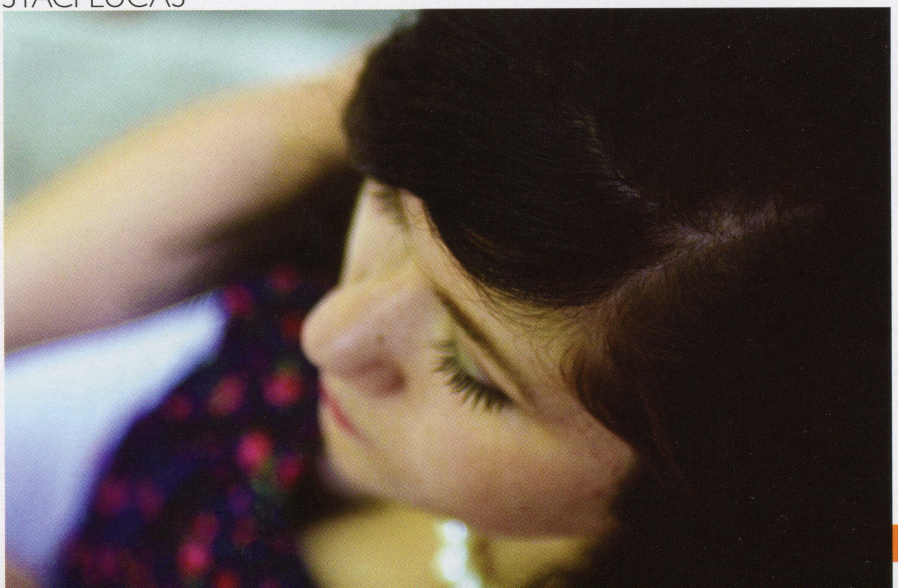
JUSTIN POE

Was that a heron flying over?
But, it's near the zenith of the winter
The heavy grey clouds are so full
But at the pink sunset
    it cannot fall like yesterday
I stood amid the storm
And watched the red lightning
Flakes fell so large
I saw the many
    colors of my reflection
Is this madness? It cannot be.



ALPHA KAMARA

STACI LUCAS



Photograph on pages 8 and 9 by
NICOLE COSTABILE

Spiderman Blues

DAVID BRANNON

"I love you, Zuba. But if you aren't happy and want to go away, I won't stand in your way."

Rique's quiet, even-handed response infuriated Azubah. She wore her passions close to the surface and when they spilled out, Riq always accepted them with a benign smile. And a month later the episode would show up as a lyric in one of Riq's songs.

Tonight, coming home from a dirt-floor blues bar, Zuba's passions were exploding. Women in the bars always came on to Riq, a blues singer the women privately referred to as "Sweetness." And he always played them, good-naturedly. He never cheated on Zuba, as far as she knew, but tonight, she wanted to make an issue of it. She really wanted a fight: a loud, epic lover's quarrel that would end in loud, epic lovemaking.

RACHEL WINGENDER

"I ain't goin' nowhere. But, if you don't stop messin' with dem womens at the club, you're goin' somewhere, all right. You goin' to the 'mergency room. I'll fix you up right, yes I will."

"You know it don' mean nothin'. They like to flirt with the guys in the band. If I don' play back to 'em, they get mad. It's jus' part of the show."

"It ain't part of no show for dem to be rubbin' up agin' you and you puttin' your hands all over 'em. You got to pull in your horns if you expec' me to stick aroun'."

"I tol' you, baby. It's jus' part of the show. I don' wan'ta fight with you 'bout it. You have a need to tell me what you think, so go 'head. But, please baby. When we get home, I need to sleep."

The game and its rules were all perfectly clear to her. She was frustrated that Riq wouldn't fight. The pleasure would be just as good for him as for her. But, he wouldn't fight! The stupid man wouldn't fight to please her, wouldn't fight to keep her, wouldn't fight to increase his passion.

He knew the game perfectly well, he was just playing his way. Singing and playing his guitar through a three-hour set left him tired in a mellow and satisfied way. His throat was a little raw and arguing made it hurt. He played her, like he played all the women, with a twinkle and a knowing smile, letting them lead the way to their own satisfaction. He was letting Zuba's tension build, letting her passion reach the point of needing physical release. It was a form of foreplay he enjoyed...and she hated.

When they got home, she slammed through the house. She went straight to the bathroom, scattering her clothes along the way, while Riq unloaded most of his equipment from the car. He timed his entrance to the bedroom with Zuba's, throwing her on the bed and grinding their beery, smoky bodies together. She was still mad, for about two

BETHANY KRENZKE

more minutes, then surrendered to their lovemaking, satisfying her need for passion in their sweating, bumping, thumping love match.

The next morning was Friday, and Riq was up at 6:00 so he could be at work by 7:30. Zuba, still dreamy-sleepy, tried to seduce Riq into staying home and making love again. She knew he wouldn't do it, but it was fun letting him know what he was missing.

Riq was a welder at the Mobile, Alabama shipyard and had been for fifteen years. Over that time, the managers tried to promote him to a supervisor's job, but Riq would have none of it. Even though it meant more money and easier manual labor, Riq stayed where he was. After a while, they stopped asking him to take the promotions. It kind of bothered Riq they no longer asked, but he knew his answer was the same. With his seniority and experience, he still benefited. He was the highest paid man in the yard and got his pick of projects to work on. So, all in all, he was satisfied.

Riq was the man they called when the repair or installation job was difficult or impossible. It was known across the yard that Riq was a magician with welding rod. He squeezed his wiry body into such tight places that they got to calling him Spiderman. He could clamp pieces together with a stern look, join dissimilar metals with a perfect bead and never blow a hole through the thinnest of material. It was rumored that he could weld a broken heart, but Riq just smiled and shook his head when they talked like that.

Riq was a virtuoso as a welder, and three nights a week, he was a virtuoso on the blues guitar. He started out like any other brash kid breaking into the local bar music scene. But he soon realized the long tradition of the music and studied it hard. He learned to play the whole range of the blues: Billie Holiday's torch songs, Muddy Waters' classic Mississippi rhythms and Bo Diddly's driving Detroit energy. He played with a pure and authentic reverence that the audiences felt and respected. He played with two different bands and if neither had a gig one night, he'd go sit in with another band for free. Almost every band he played with in the past moved on to rock and roll or toward the Motown sound. In each case, he wished them well and joined another band playing the true blues sound, what he called the Mother Tongue.

To him, you didn't play the blues, you lived it. The Mother Tongue required real life in the lyrics. And when he sang the blues, even the standards, he put his own real life, his own real emotions and his own real passions into it. That was the thing the audiences liked about his music. He added lyrics to the familiar songs, his own lyrics from his own life. His fans related to the lyrics because they were from their lives, too.

The following Saturday afternoon, Zuba attacked Riq again about getting ahead in life. They just returned from buying groceries and Zuba saw a magazine article about a band that Riq played with three years before.

"You're jus' too damn complacent," Zuba complained. "All dem young boys is out making money right now from the record company, an' they ain't doin' nothin'. What can you do to get paid for doin' nothin?"

"Zuba, I'm happy doin' what I'm doin'. Maybe that's being complacent to you. But I'm right where I want to be."

"You don' see nothin' wrong with dem other boys making good money when you know you're a better blues singer? You don' see nothin' wrong with that?"

"What I see is they ain't paid their dues. 'Bout ever one of 'em is jus' a flash in the pan. None of 'em last more 'n a couple o' years. Then they disappear altogether, failures. I don' want that, and neither do you. They're little fishes get eat up in the big world. I'm a big fish. Hell, I'm damn near the king fish in Mobile. An' that suits me jus' fine."

"I always knowed you was a smart man. Sometimes smart means bein' cautious and sometimes it means takin' a risk. I think sometimes you been cautious too long. You're good. You're better 'n all dem boys. You could really show 'em somethin' in Memphis or Detroit. Make lots o' money and be somebody."

"See, it ain't about money. It's about knowing your stuff and getting respect. It's been a long time comin', but I got that now."

"So you're done? You got no more to do, no place you want to go? You ready to die?"

Zuba was pressing hard now, cutting into the bone of his pride. And it hurt. The lyric was right, "It hurts when you want them so bad. Hurts worse when you let them get close."

"That's not fair, Zuba. There's more I want to do, more I want to learn."

"More to learn? You know every note to every song and ever'body that ever sung it. What more you got to learn?"

"I been thinkin' about what you been sayin'. I haven't tried for records or the big-name bands 'cause I wasn't finished learning. Well, I learned a lot more than jus' notes and lyrics. I learned about people, what makes 'em happy and sad, what drives 'em crazy, how they work, you know? When I talk to some of the kids 'bout their problems, the answers jus' come into my head. An' it comes from the music. It's all

LAUREN LEE

the music. People think I'm smart, but I'm not. I'm jus' talkin' the music to 'em an' it helps 'em. 'Course, it helps 'em cause they know it's the truth. It makes sense to 'em in their souls, the music speaks to their souls."

"So what you gonna do, become a blues-singin' preacher man."

"Yeah! We'll hold services in the Black Cat and the Lucky Rose. Or maybe we can open the Mobile Blues Bar University! But, no…I think I should start writin' my own songs. I got ever'thing I need to write my own songs. That's what I want to learn now, that's what I want to do."

Zuba brightened. "You can sell your songs to other bands! Real bands that already made it. You can be successful dat way."

"I can get respect that way. And if I make a few dollars along the way, I'll give 'em all to you." ✤

NICOLE MYRICK

FARA TOPOLSKY

KAELIN CLEMENTS

Plow Night

ASHLEY FERGUSON

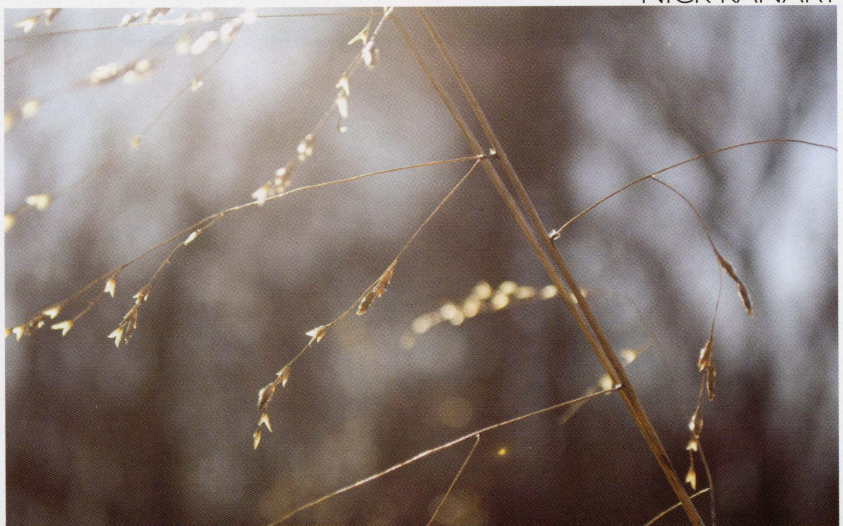
It's the scarecrow and his absence of shadow
Who has money in his eyes and the stick up
With the rows of hot wheat stalks that
Glob up under that one big, bitten cookie
After spit flies from farmers' mouths
At fast and dirty boys that are only
Trying to eat and run at the same time.

It's the wife of some name only he doesn't
Waiting for the mauve to settle into empty
And eating lips tingling far from the gown
Given then and now won't be removed
Since he never does come home to hips
Shared with the ring on emotion's finger.

It's the blind horse being slaughtered
With healthy men and their loving pennies
In a bloodshed barn that lets no white
Come across except the shine of what
Off cosmos and slim planes so far ahead
They can't see what stain they left to sky
Except a mess of ink and homemade jelly
Under momma's worldly guarded skirt.

TRE EDWARD SEALS

NICK KANARY



Roomful of Muses
MITCH MONIN

O Wise Gurus!
Serve me your knowledge
On a gold or silver
Or platinum or empty plate

I am not jealous or upset
Just impressed.
If there were any references, I missed them all
Just flowers.

As ridiculous as it may sound,
Though I may have my doubts about that,
Wise, historical, literary gurus
Once again I am not jealous
And I am not sorry

I have nothing clever to say about it,
And I'm not kissing up,
Being clever can be dangerous
Especially when you're so vocal

Wise gurus in other forms
We're in one place for a sec.
Then we're jumping around.
Sadly enough
The place I hate the most—I'm going there.

Gurus!—literary technique.
I had to dumb it down to your level
And it would still be censored.
A peek into the persona's life.

There's a pleasure in this melancholy,
Not that I don't like this stanza,
That sounds a little more complicated
Than we can show right now.
I can feel that.

DERRICK CULLEN

Pondering Life
JASON VAN SLYKE

Like the formation of the wave
The crest was the dirtiest, when she
shit herself or couldn't make it upstairs
So it broke against a synthetic sand
I wonder if he'll be the same
It's hard for me to say

Two Stones at the Bottom of the Lake

NICK RING

They are, they are the skipping stones
Thrown only across the surface.
Is it worth it,
To never dream of getting this deep?
We are one less stones
Here at the bottom of a lake,
And we would pray, we would pray
If only we believed.
We are, we are the stones
At the bottom of the lake,
And we know, we know, we know

Oh, Angelfish
Swimming by we
Hope that you might be
Any one of these.

It's the sky in silence
Only to remind us of
The questions that weigh us
Down, that set you
Loose, and let us know
That you're still around, and if we
Look hard enough,
We'll see you
Waving, smiling down from the
Dark side of the moon echoing
Down, "Hey man, that's what's up!"

On a warm, clear day,
You can see
The perfectly painted
Death tree
That brings new life
In colors crazy
The blue-eyed god
Lies by the water side,
Shhh, he's asleep...

After a painting by Salvador Dali,
RACHEL WINGENDER

ALYSON COCKRELL

Silk

GRETCHEN WILLOUGHBY

Free to grace floor-bound, cardboard
containers in yards, corner-used bistros,
Goodwill, metal, slender arms of support,
bins with discarded rags of memory waiting
for bargain housewives, occasional, undercover,
torn-jeaned, heiress figurines for silk luxury of
skin-dragged, sense-enraged escapes of hormonal
ecstasy. We were once entombed in glass and
chrome coffins of Bloomingdale, florescent, DeLaurent
nurturing, draping plasticine seductresses in close
discomfort of polished tile walkways, assaulted by
perfume terrorists in specifically hemmed couture.
We, in our hand-scratched, three-dollared illuminations,
Wait for peacefully, wantingly, unaccostingly, silent weeks
for unmonikered, frail housewivian and sororital
bargain maidens to imagine fondling us while fondling
the excitements of unsuspecting, titillated men in night clubs.

CHRIS JAEGER

A Parable having nothing to do with the above

JUSTIN POE

The beetle, after having rolled dung for most of the day—all of the day—discovered a hole, dug by one large hellish worm, and crawled in, getting stuck right around the mid-section of its body. "Damn, not again," said the beetle. "This happens to me every time." Although the beetle had eaten dung most of the day—all of the day—it was still hungry. "Why do I roll dung anyway?" it thought. Times before, the beetle had waited until its starvation had decreased the size of its mid-section and then crawled to the end of the tunnel to freedom. "Again, I'll wait."

Two days passed and the beetle was still unable to move. Something began touching its back legs.

"Stop that; don't touch me. Pull me out and I'll give you a kiss," the beetle pleaded.

Its breath had attracted a rather small rather naked mole-rat whose hole it had been blocking.

"Give me a kiss and I'll push you out," said the rather naked mole-rat.

Deliberating, the beetle said, "tell me what is touching my legs out back and I'll decide."

The rather naked mole-rat bit off one of the beetle's front legs, "okay, be right back."

The beetle flailed in agony. "You lunatic, I needed that!"

The rather naked mole-rat returned and devoured the first half of the beetle.

A crow devoured the other half.

LEAH ARIZALA

KATIE FERSCH

Exquisite Paranoia

BREMER ACOSTA

Azul-eyes stung of fear in the shade of a bedroom. Jessica grappled with bed covers, indented an old and brown-stained mattress with her slender curvature, as her pillow moistened from sweat and paranoia. Her stomach gurgled, burped and swished with nervousness, while she clicked a fan on to drown out the silence of prickling needles on her skin. She lay on her bed, clutching a warm silver .45, in case her abusive ex tried to feel the cold delicacy of her body, in the dullness of the night.

A surge of robberies, rapes and murders plagued the newspapers and media-stations. Around her neighborhood, among the identical brick-layered row homes, she waited for a chance to use the gun. She had gotten used to fear, to the tremors and the clammy hands, to a quiver of her chin, to the anxiety gnawing at the insides of her cheeks. With the fan whirring, Jessica sat rigidly against her bed and swallowed dry spit.

Footsteps outside the apartment tapped near and became distant echoes. Her large and muscular German Shepherd perked his ears and sat upright, growling lightly. His furry black and grey coat shadowed most of the yellow light that bathed her apartment from the street lamps outside.

The dog growled louder, drooling onto wooden flooring, a collar ringing from restrained aggression. Barking raw, he sounded like a shell blast in the night. The door knob jiggled. She gently un-cocked the safety, and sat coldly, waiting to contend with her paranoia.

Illustration on pages 20 and 21 by
KERRI CAPONETTO

Can We Go Over This Again?

ALEX TACIAK

Now I know what you're thinking. Not literally though, I'm not a psychic (though that would be pretty cool). I was saying, in a figurative manner of course, that I have a good idea of what your thoughts are on this matter. But maybe the real question is: can I really presume to know what you really think? After all, we are two different people, each with our own unique life story and background that makes us individuals. So maybe I don't know what you're thinking. But you know what I meant. Or do you? I just got finished saying how I shouldn't presume your thoughts, but here I am doing it again! How silly of me. Don't you think that's silly of me? I, personally, think it was quite silly.

But anyway, what was I saying? You know I've forgotten? Yeah, it just slipped my mind. Once again I'm speaking figuratively. Nothing actually slipped in some low friction area of my mind and dropped out. Though that would explain a lot of things, am I right? But all jokes aside (that was a joke, just fyi*, in case you missed it), I really cannot remember what we were talking about. I suppose it wasn't all that important.

What if it was though? I shouldn't presume. We could have been talking about The Meaning of Life, or The Economic Crisis, or The Holocaust, or The Starving Children. I'm terribly sorry if we were (not that they shouldn't be spoken of, I just meant I shouldn't have been so presumptive). I didn't mean to imply, and if I did imply I am again quite sorry, that those things or anything like those things were not important. I really need to watch what I say.

Though I suppose it would be more apt to say, "I need to listen to what I say". Because you can't actually watch your words, now can you? Literally I mean. Well maybe you could, I suppose, if you write them down first and then look at them. Or look at them while writing them. What I mean is that you can literally watch your words on the page (or the computer screen, if that's how you do things) when writing them. Then again, I may be taking my words to be more literal than they really are in this case. All I'm saying is that I need a greater awareness of my words. At least I think that's all I'm saying anyway.

ALYSON COCKRELL

*For your information

NHU NGUYEN

Happy New Year

NICK RING

Sneak a key
Like a thief
To my
Treasure chest
Yes, yes
Reveal these rhythms
So they echo less
Run off with
My red drum

Remove my lid
Look within
Where is my mind
Where is my mind
Which one flew
Over the cuckoo's nest,
Off west, come home again,
Where the future wrote itself

After all,
It beats to quit,
You lose to win,
And our rhythms will fade out
Because we were made to break
But it's OK

Go get lost
Get in the way
Habits to be broken
For sure, by chance
This expression just doesn't suit you

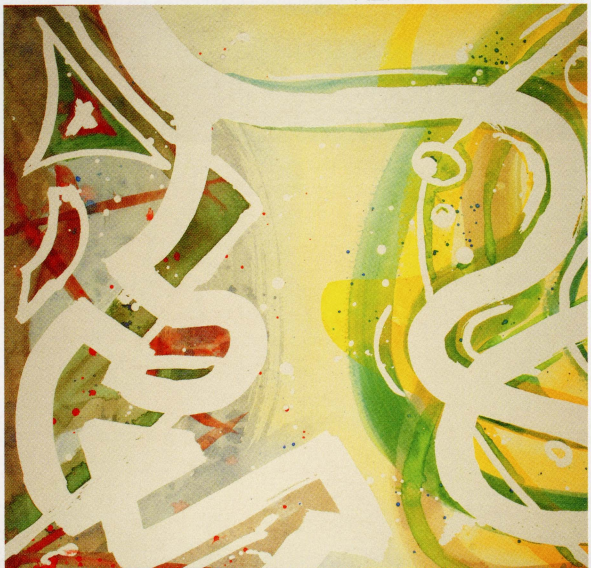
I chased a squirrel into a Laundromat and afterwards I couldn't find it, or the Master Inquisitor

MITCH MONIN

I just chased a squirrel into a Laundromat and afterwards I can't find it
Because it's gone
because I don't know where it went
and I'll never find it
'cause it's not here anymore
and I wanted to catch it
and maybe it's under the dryers
but I don't hear it banging around under there
'cause if it were scared it'd be banging around under there
'cause I've seen squirrels run
and when they get scared they run really really fast
and they bounce up and down
but that's mostly their tails
'cause their tails are so fluffy
and they don't really run they just sorta hop
at least that's what my Dad told me
and my Dad tells me everything
'cause he knows everything
and he loves me
so he tells me stuff
like when we went fishing
he taught me to catch the biggest fish
and I couldn't
but we saw a squirrel then too
only it was fatter
and a different color
and it wasn't moving at all
and I don't think that squirrel would fit under the dryers
or if any squirrels would fit under here at all
'cause it already looks pretty crowded under there
and a squirrel just won't fit.

CHRIS JAEGER

KENNY RASINSKI



The Middle

JUSTIN POE

With the shrinking middle
I fill my life's poverty
With all my bills & mandates
My change less edible buys me nothing
The family slips, cracks, & breaks
And we go on searching
For someone else to take us in
I wonder if starving is worth it

NICK KANARY

KATIE FERSCH

NICOLE COSTABILE

Pages of Dictionaries

JAMES CURRAN

in closed pages of dictionaries
awaiting usage by children
clutching video controllers burning
MP3s not candles at midnight learning
violin sonatas and minor chords piccicato
conversations over street market
Chianti and stone ground pepper salads
of argument and debate. Subtleties
hide in steamer trunks and sock
drawers accordion files discarded for
electronic wallets of remembrance
dried cracked love letters from a time
when romance was a chance touch
in darkness in a room later sold to
strangers from towns unknown who
repainted our scratches of passion.
All we have now are stanzas of verse
created in sanctuaries of wondering
if tomorrow would bring precipitation
of inspiration an exhaling of grace
in scribblings of poetry and fiction

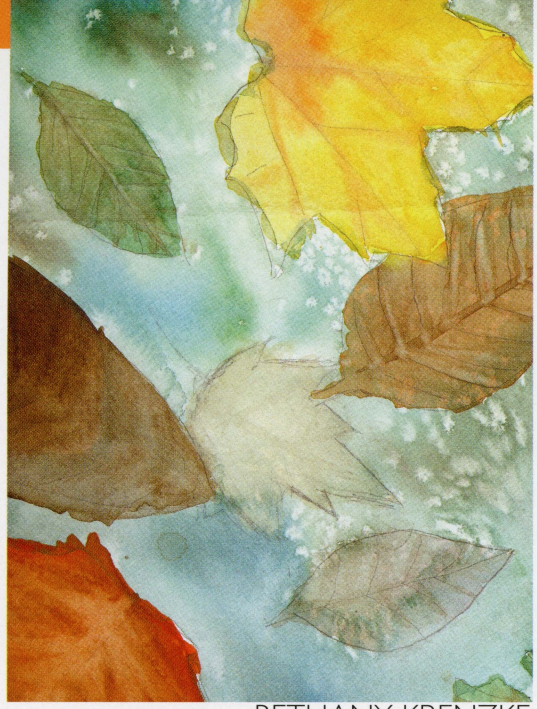
LAUREN LEE

NICK CROSSEN

Green Sun Blues

EVE LANGLEY

Spiraling trails twirl throughout the mountain
topping the peak with an evergreen frosting,
trickling down the sides
like an iced cake that has yet to cool.
Abundantly blue skies clouded with giant air mattresses
surround the endless green stream of woods,
a clearing in the center with short sprigs of grass shooting up,
an endless spring year round.
Concealed in the warm sun's glow
two lovers lay grasped in each others' arms.
Pressed endoskeleton to endoskeleton, breaths swirling
they laze about for the world to see,
knowing that these days will be their last
before true life separates them once again
as it has the eons before.
Lingering thoughts and caresses hang in the air
as the lovers part till the next spring.
Clouds begin to darken and pour down their load,
the rain washing away traces of the past,
down the sides of the mountain
and off of the cliff top.



BETHANY KRENZKE

RACHEL WINGENDER

Love: A Snapshot

ASHLEY FERGUSON

I am an ignorant doe in mid–flight,
Legs spinning furiously like four rogue sparklers.
The child in my chest flies open.

With no control in my cartwheel, I think of you,
Who called me an animal.
So where does that leave us? Engaged in a sphere of bestiality?

If only the ground and I could meet everywhere in the middle.
Then I could rise up on my shaking brown twigs,
Falter, slide, and snap until it's safe to risk flight again.

The trees are such handsome, candid shelter,
Yet the lights of you persuade me back to hot pavement.
Again, I let you strike me; rotate me into rancor and tart injury.

I've watched them all die in the cuff of a swift lamp,
In the romance of quick circles and hard shells.
How can I split something that has never been split?

In the mother of the woods I find my footing.
From behind the silhouette of my rapidly thrashing heart,
I see the light of you, and I begin to pace.

DERRICK CULLEN

REBECCA RHODE

Fat Stuff

FARA TOPOLSKY

Peace and quiet, that's what I want
To sleep all day,
With no interruptions
How excellent that would be

But if my servants leave,
Who will feed me?
I do love my food

I will sleep on the couch
And perhaps the servants will
Scratch my back.
How much I love that.

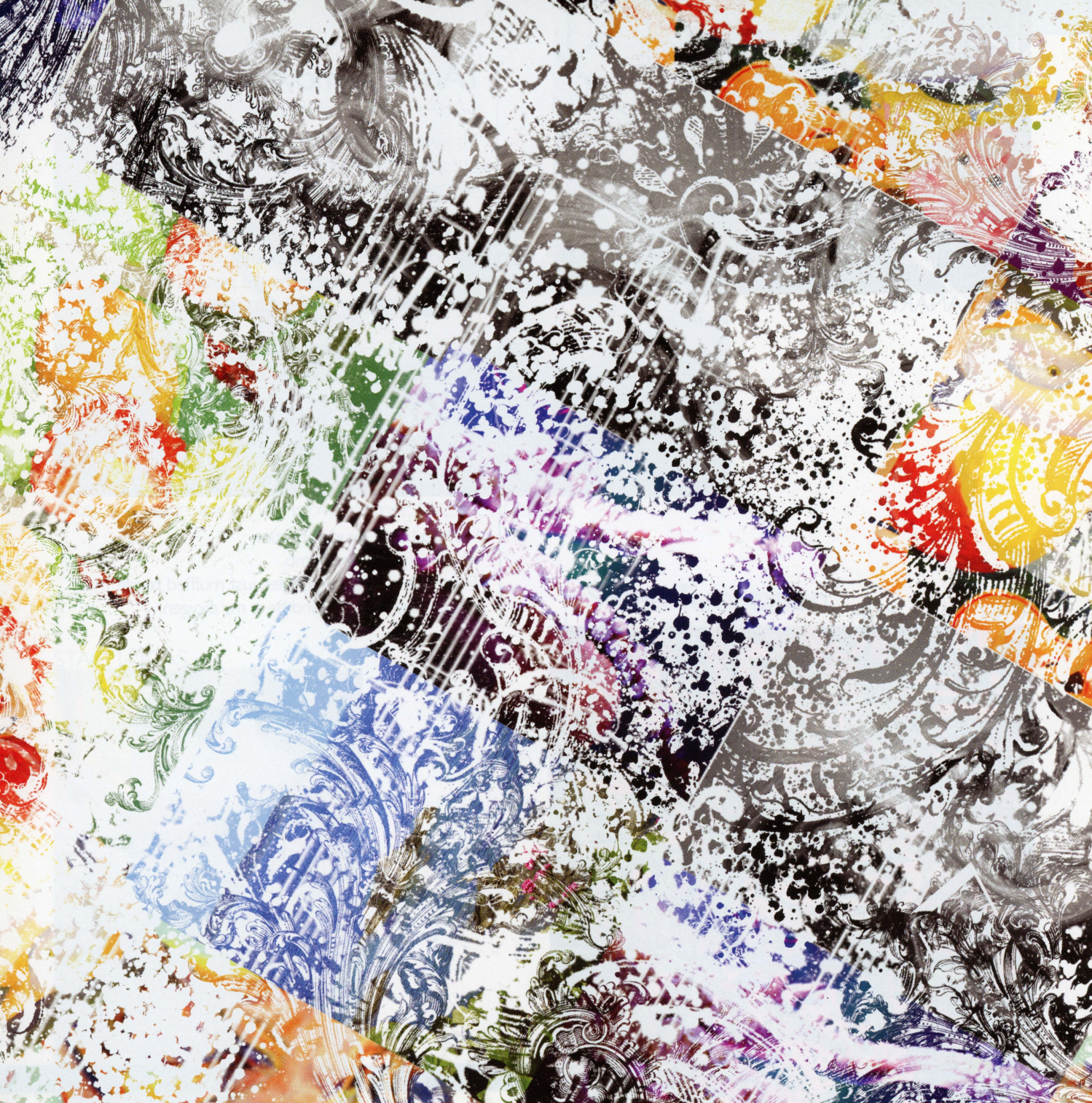
Fat and lazy they say I am
I chased down and killed that bug
Did I not?

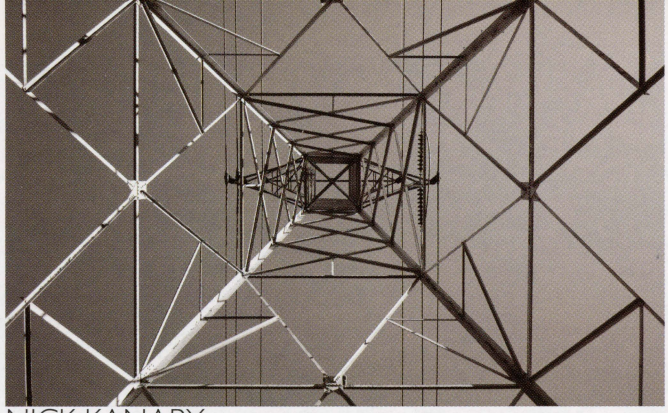
Lazy and fat they say I am
The string you dangled in front of me
I playfully batted at
Did I not?

Now good servant
Curl up on the couch with me
Nap with me
And tell me you love me

How much you love your fat, lazy cat.

Electronic Collage on pages 30 and 31 by
LAYLA THOMPSON





NICK KANARY

I Am a Sunflower

SARAH WARRENFELTZ

My absence threatened your sanity, but
our giggles turned into sighs transformed to kisses,
and we fell into naïveté.

Then, your aquamarine eyes reflected sunshine.
My pores smiled at your touch.
A breeze blew through the sea grass at our heads,
and I savored your cherry Chapstick.

You were the nitrogen after the thunderstorm
that made me green again.

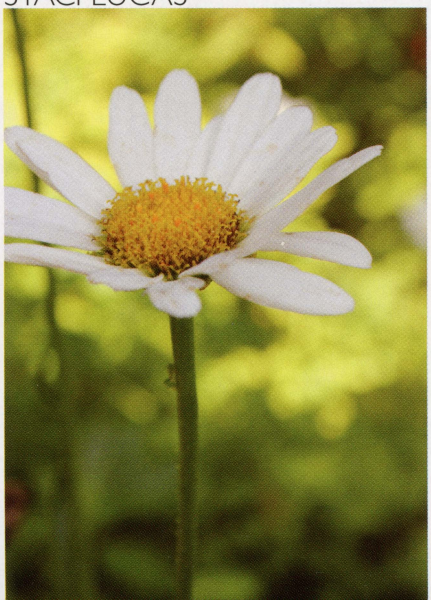
But soon, your eyes became frosted glass,
and the cherries on your lips began to rot.
Your absence threatened my sanity;
your mouth stiffened and wandered from mine.

His hazel eyes exude affection
while my pores are numb.
There are no sighs or giggles, just muffled regret that
you are my nitrogen, and he is my oxygen.

REBECCA HUYNH

After a watercolor by Winslow Homer, NICK CROSSEN

STACI LUCAS



Sweet Temptation

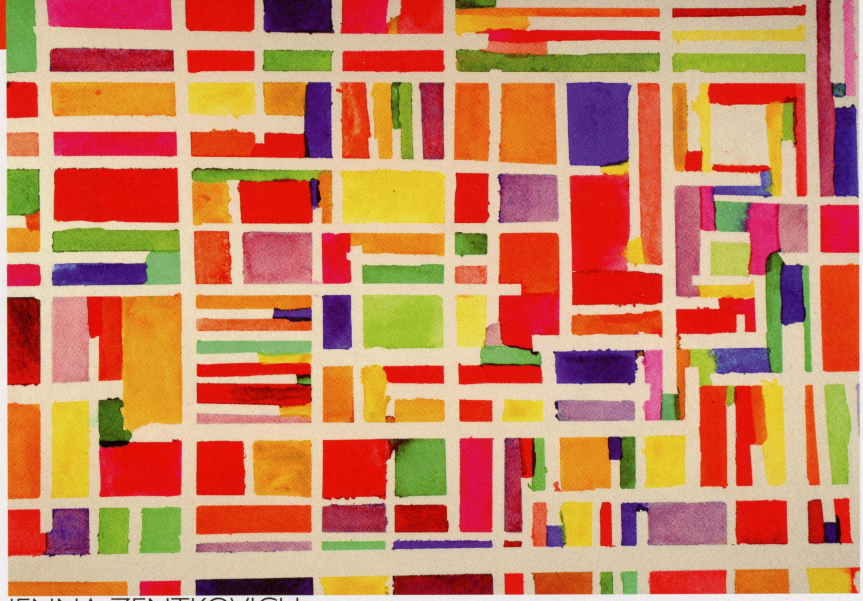
FARA TOPOLSKY

Is your torment an attempt to destroy me?
Your color is like milk chocolate, so rich and brown.
I want you so badly, can't you see,
That your teasing makes my red lips frown?

I've tried satisfying this insatiable craving,
But nothing compares to you my love.
If I don't have you soon I will go raving,
Mad with the distance between us, that orange glove.

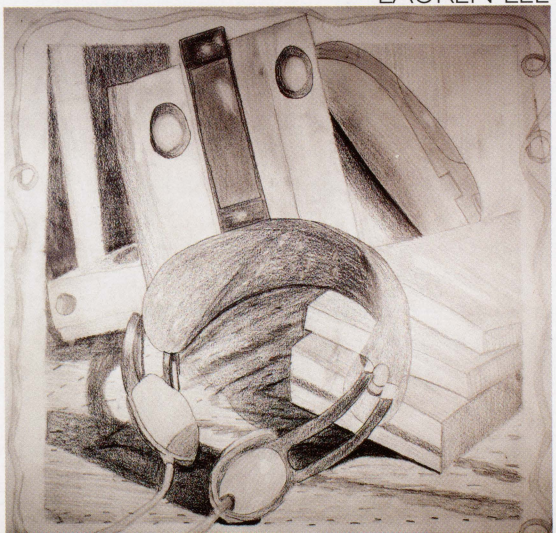
Losing all self-control, I rip off your shiny dress,
Licking my fingers slowly, and then again once more,
I devour your sweetness, making a sticky mess.
I will not have just one or two, perhaps I will have four.

Starting with a small bite, and then gobbling you up.
How much I love you, Reese's peanut butter cup.



JENNA ZENTKOVICH

LAUREN LEE



Summer Grilling

JAMES CURRAN

It's hot coals or wood chips that summer us
Into flavors that entice us to licking
Embarrassment in crowds burning beside
Pools. Neighbors lean atop word fences
Staring, sniffing untouchable metal rods of
Their own spitting and sizzling barbeque spit
On unsuspecting linens and lounge chairs.
It causes citizenry to witness neighborhoodian
Fables of crocuses and campouts avoiding
Ptomaine and tarantula sized invaders.
On shopping lists we scribble needs for allergies
And addictions, willingnesses and wavings of
Bias and how we tolerate the crows that perforate
Our Glad Wrap, the crows that perforate our ear
Canals with folk rock fiascos on fluorescent lit
Party boxes. On weekdays, we watch reruns
In rooms with closets of empty hangers and neatly
Folded Totes rain shunners munching on six calorie
Crumble chocolate.

NICK CROSSEN

sweet sheets

CORY ZANKER

why can't i sleep?

dehydration
no—desperation,
doubt and summer seeping through
sharp skin like paddle cactus juice.

why can't i move before
i've smelled rotting apples in the shade
and seen cicada skins suspended
from broken branches, twigs and roots?

infected feelings feeling fighting
frantic thunder, it's almost noon,

it's too soon for summer day storms
it's too cool for sweating sheets
which refuse to lay unmoved.

sweet, smothered silence,
a weathervane lay buried
under stones and shattered druse.

why can't i sleep
so sound and slowly sipping
sentimental mental streams
which mean so much more than you?

it's summer's stains:
its ripened grapevine clouds
are waiting to change hues.

Metaphysical

NICK RING

DERRICK CULLEN

Big bang beat begin:
Gravity is god;
Reality is a work of friction;
Life drips water;
Existence is inertiatic…

Gravity is god.
That's why your souls are on your feet;
That's why it's hard to be light-hearted, to feel the levity of life.
Heavy is the love holding you:
The force that binds it all together
On this green-golden-blue earth,
Birthed with enough love and brilliance and radiance…
From a distance, it even looks alive,
The chosen one suckling at the sweet teat of the Milky Way, the Motherly Tao…

Metaphysical
Might be found in the physical…
Visions of heaven are early projections of eternity spent in sunset-lit clouds;
Hallucinations of Hades look a hell of a lot like volcanoes–
Peep holes to the mantle, key holes to the core, Mother Earth's nativity scene–
Incidentally like the sun of god, the hearth of our system.

Always the third planet is alive and thrives
Because always slowly sliding away from that sacred position
We all become light burned off the sun, layer by layer, till we're done, cooked that is, long after death.

If alone,
We are the eyes and ears of all our universe,
One voice, just one round of words in a wordless
Song sang, big bang, the beat.
I am the blinking universe!
We think we have mouths to sing and shout,
Hands and feet to stomp and clap,
To go and do, or stay and meditate like trees;
Unlike trees we are
Just ghosts for the most part,
Saying our peace since stopped our evolution,

Still no revolution, though both would be nice.
Now we just revolve around
One of god's many sons, he's very proud, he'll tell you how bright and well-rounded they are…

Newton, the prophet, the apple of god's eye,
Laying down the laws of motion,
So accepting of gravity's conditions, god's love…

Gravity is omnipresent and potent, is omniscient.
Thought carries weight
That's why we might find true love, through fate;
That's why it's hard to be light-hearted, to feel the levity of heaven–
A little extra oxygen,
Even the slightest hang time,
A momentary release is euphoria.

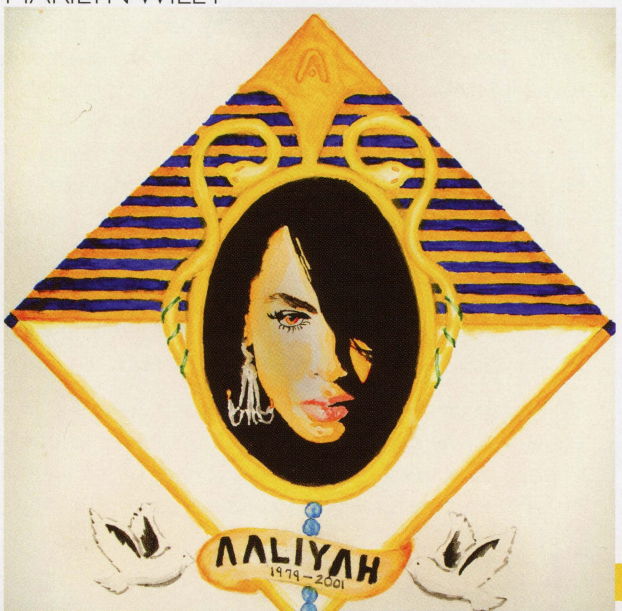
Dark energy is that equal and opposite,
Accelerating and expanding the universe,
Reaching for the Big Freeze,
The anti-climax.
No reverse diaspora?
Not gonna rewind the movie before returning it?
What's the matter?
What's the anti-matter?

Einstein, the theologian of reality,
Theory of relativity in hand,
Realized the convergence of feminine space and Father Time,
Bending around the matters of the universe.
There is one hole in his hypothesis:
Black holes are the god-chakras,
Singularities, power points, energy centers,
Where there is no space-time,
There is only gravity and infinity
Where every possibility happens all the time
Creating the question,
If gravity is god,
Then who is quantum?

Supernatural is natural,
Paranormal-normal.
Metaphysical
Might be found in the physical.

Existence is inertiatic;
Life drips water;
Reality is a work of friction;
Dark energy is the equal and opposite;
Gravity is god. ✤

MARILYN WILEY



The Severed Arm

JUSTIN POE

Gaslights one rarely sees, but Rayburn has a few that light the path on his street. They guide him wending, faint will o' wisps, flickering, some, from small cracks in the stained glass, flames controlled by the whims of the wind. A late night, he shouldn't have stayed out so late. He's tired and cold, but the night out was so very close to him. He spends much time about himself, having lost many of his friends to here and there, save a few whom he swept away the dust of time with on this night. Firing fast, there is his apartment, closing on the street.

Stop fumbling with the locks, Rayburn, and open the door if you are so tired. There he is, opening the door. Monotonous stairs, never changing, immutable by a way; his thoughts are poetic. The second door, leading to his room, he always has trouble with. He has even taken off the molding when his keys were lost, and he has used a pocket-knife to pry open the thumb of the lock to slide the door ajar, and he has paid a few fines for breaking and chipping the corners of his driver's license. Neighbors watch him crouch intently before his door, working at the two door-bolts and door-set. The tenant-owner tisks and turns his head. "I need no," Rayburn would always say. When will he scale the wall…?

This night he hasn't lost his means to bed—the door opens swiftly, pulled open by the vacuum of his flat. Forgetfulness toys with him. One of the living room windows he left open. He's so tired, he doesn't take his jacket off, nor does he close the window, nor does he adjust the thermostat. He locks the locks after shutting the door. He retires to bed full-dressed—his keys hanging on a hook labeled: "Don't forget these, Rayburn," beside his apartment door.

Dreadful dreams most readily visit Rayburn when his climate is cold, catching him off-guard and interrupting his sleep apnea. Able to drift in this soft silence…

Wake Rayburn. The quivering of his body wakes him. "Heavenly angels," he erects upright, opening his eyes to the light of his burning lamp, catching the scurrying of murine shadows. His eyes are spotlights. Down and across the muntin of his bedroom window shine small galaxies of water. He shakes his head seeing it is 1:07am and it is raining. Laying himself back down, he turns over—

The shadow of his arm severed hangs from a hook on his Wall—to darkness.

Scurrying up the stone Wall of the Tower, he clings to the overhanging edge and heaves himself over. "Damn, my hands are bleeding."

"No worries, chap, I'll spot you," an armor-clad soldier with lance in his left pats Rayburn's shoulder. "Medic to the Wall… got scraped hands!" his thunder rings his metal suit. "Aven't seen you before; where you from?" he sings in a tone telling he has asked this many a time.

"Boston," Rayburn answers.

"Good, I'm New Yorker. Glad to have y''.

NICOLE COSTABILE

The medic replaces the soldier.

"Bandaged hands, good to go. Fight soldier," commands the medic, pushing Rayburn from the Tower.

Back in the room.

Damn Rayburn, stay asleep. Fast asleep amid the depth of the ocean. Swimming deep, but suffocating in his breathing.

Alas again he wakes.

A wraith in red settles over his body. "Succubus," he shouts, murmuring afterward speedy prayers. A strike of lightning between their eyes leaves Rayburn feeling as though he has lost something of himself. A seductive face, sexy phantom, he reaches for the wind. The figure moves without upsetting the air, to the Wall, then through the door, leaving—

Rayburn leaps to the small desk beside him and composes:

The ticking of my watch
Lulling me to sleep—
Only soon to be awoken
From a slumbering deep

From a Tower high I fall
Catching no stone of the mural
How betrayed by a fellow soldier
Into an ocean to be my burial

Impatient mine eyes plea to open
Damned if only I had the strength
To pry the lids open an inch
All the distance needed—

Wake I wish, if only to breathe
Capture the first sight before—
A phantom, wraith of glowing ruby
Passing from me to my door

"Where are you going?
And what is your Will?
Thief, what have you taken?"
An unchaste glance over the shoulder
Dissipating or passing through
The closed bedroom door

My lamp is lit, am I alone?
A crimson cloak hangs from the *porte*
And on the Wall a portrait penciled
Left
My watch-clad left arm
That vision left
Dripping red onto the carpet

The dream of an average poet. ✤

JENNA ZENTKOVICH

The Baby Traders

DAVID BRANNON

"What's after you this time?" Colby's mother hardly looked up as he careened through the kitchen door, slammed it shut and braced his shoulder against it.

"Uh, space goons, Mom. Space goons are after me."

"Uh huh. Mrs. Fletcher already called. She said it could have happened to anybody. Mr. Fletcher already has the power washer out getting the paint off the sidewalk and off his car. You're not going to jail today. At least, not for that."

"It wasn't my fault, Mom. Honest. I didn't do anything."

"Hmm, mm. Sometimes, all you have to do is show up and things start happening all by themselves."

"Yeah, that's it. It did it by itself. Yeah."

"Why don't you go up to your room and tell Holt all about your morning. I'm sure he'd be interested in your side of the story."

Colby wasn't sure if he was being punished or not, being sent to his room. Sometimes it was hard to tell with his mom.

He closed the door to his room, then listened at the door for a moment. It was a trick his Uncle Ted taught him from his days as a spy.

"Another busy day of neighborhood terrorism?" Observed Colby's stuffed dragon.

"Hi, Holt. Don't you start on me, too. Mr. Fletcher shouldn't have left the paint on top of the stepladder like that. How was I to know it would fall when I jumped off the top rung?"

"Ah, yes. Life is just a minefield of tragedy when you're five years old. And it's only ten o'clock in the morning."

"Boy, you said it. Every time I turn around, something's breaking or falling over or getting wet. It must be a rule or something: "Trouble just comes to five year old boys."

REBECCA RHODE

"It must be a rule that only applies to you. I don't remember getting into so much trouble when I was a young dragon."

"Oh, I'm sure you were a perfect angel. A Mr. Goody-Goody baby boy."

"At least, my parents never talked about trading me in for a newer model."

"What are you talking about?"

"I heard your mother talking to a neighbor. She said she would like to have another baby, but you just took too much energy. She said it would be nice if she could trade you in for a new one."

"What? They can do that? No they can't. Can they?"

"You know how your Mother likes to shop for bargains. The way she was talking, I think if she got a good offer, she might trade."

"I've never heard of that. Where do you think they do that, trade kids in?"

"I don't know. Your Mom buys everything at Super K-Mart. Maybe that's where they do it."

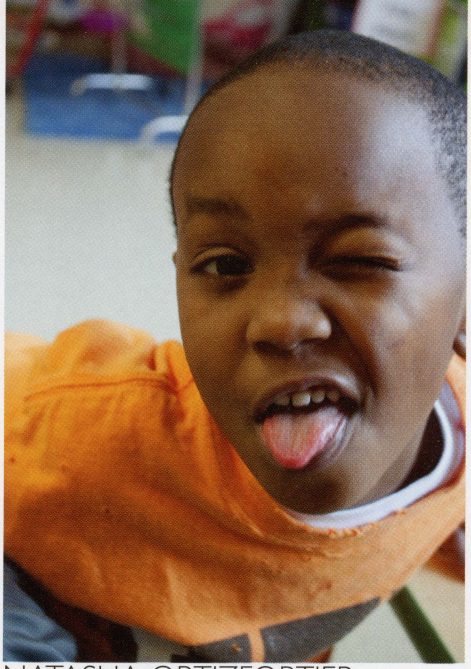
"I was bought at K-Mart? Is that what you're saying?"

"Your Mom gets everything there."

"I don't know about this. It just doesn't sound right."

"If I were you, I'd be concentrating on my good behavior and being careful if your mother wants to take you to K-Mart."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. Golly, I thought it was hard being good for a few weeks before Christmas. Now, I have to be good year-round. I don't know if that's possible. There's so many things that just seem to happen. I'm doomed, Holt. I'll never be able to be good for a whole year at a time."



NATASHA ORTIZFORTIER

"I'll miss you, little buddy. Can I have your comic books when you're gone?"

"No! And I'm not goin' without a fight. She can't get rid of me that easily. She'll see. I can be good . . . if I have to . . . most of the time."

"Yes, firm planning and dedication. That's the ticket."

Later that day, Colby was contemplating bugs in the sandbox when Suzy Collins walked by.

"Hey, Suzy. C'mere. I want to ask you something."

Suzy walked to the sandbox, guardedly. Colby always played tricks on her and she had learned to be careful.

"Suzy, where do babies come from?"

"I knew you'd say something disgusting."

"No, really. I need to know. Holt, er, a friend of mine said his mom was going to trade him in for a new baby. Do you know where they do that?"

"Oh, a friend of yours said that? Well, in that case, moms

can trade their babies at card games, at schools and at special stores at the mall."

"Really? My friend said he was brought home from K-Mart. Is that possible, does K-Mart sell babies?"

"Sure, they have a little room that you've probably never seen. Only moms and girls are allowed in there. But I don't think your friend came from K-Mart."

"You don't? Where else could he have come from?"

"I think he came from a yard sale. Or maybe a 'moving out of town sale'. Yeah, that sounds more like it. Or maybe a second hand store."

At this point Suzy was walking rapidly away.

"No, no. I've got it. You came from a junkyard. Your mom brought you home in a garbage bag. The trashmen left you behind by mistake. They took a can of trash and left you in trade. Ha ha ha. Johnny, the garbage boy. Ha ha ha."

"I'll get you for this, Suzy Collins. I'll get you." Johnny spent the next hour in the sandbox building Collinsville then destroying it in increasingly diabolical ways. First there was a meteor shower. Then Godzilla strolled through town. Johnny was carrying a pail of water for the flood that would next destroy the city when his mother called to him from the driveway.

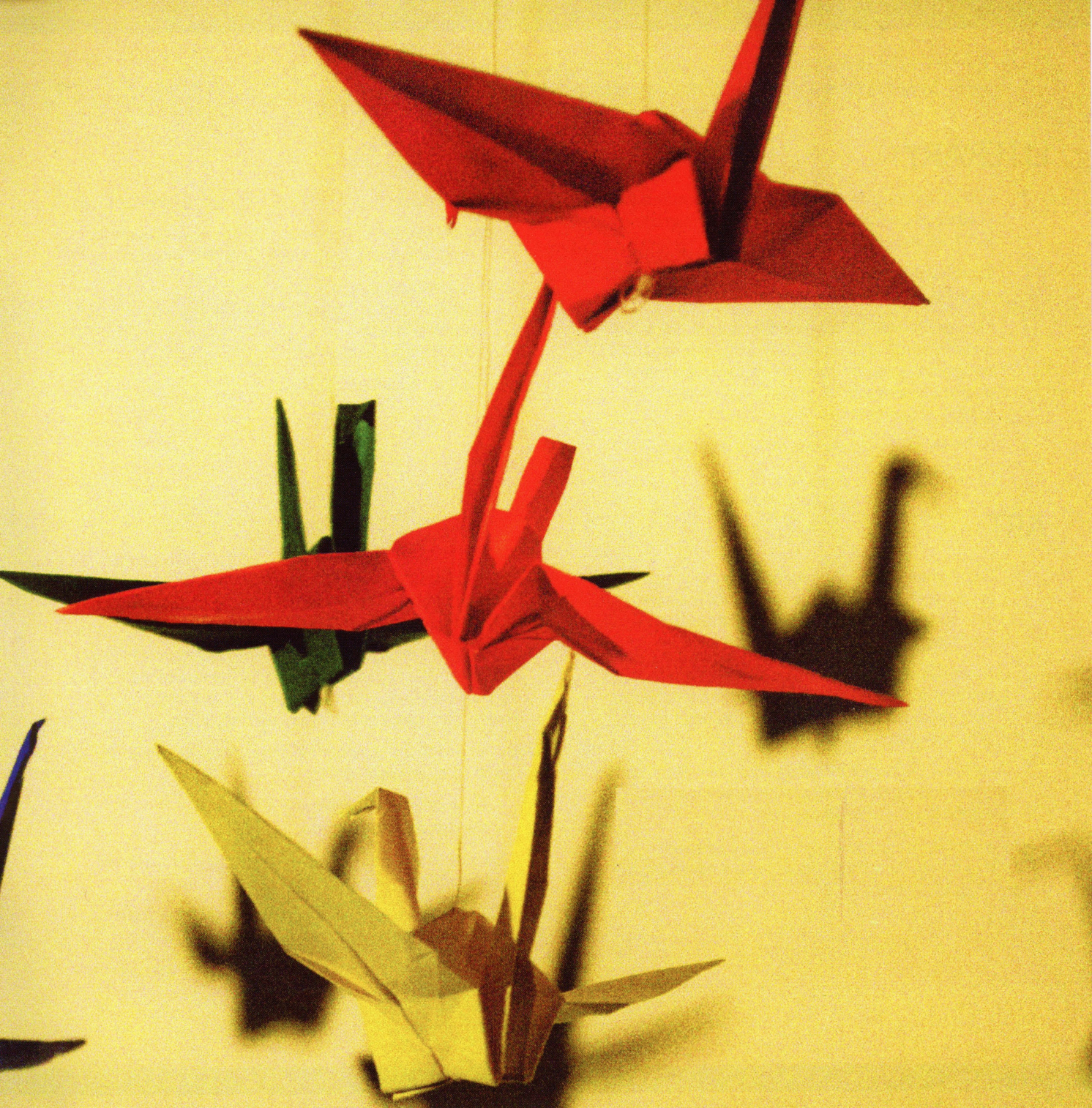
"Colby. I have to run to the store. I'll just be a few minutes. Do you want to come along or stay home with your father? I'm going to K-Mart."

K-Mart?!

"Uh, no mom. I'd better stay home and clean up my room. Maybe I'll read a book or something while you're gone. See ya."

His mother took a little longer shopping than she planned that day. 'Clean up his room?' 'Read a book?' She was sure he was up to something, but what could it be this time? She had already bought every book on parenting she could find. But none of them explained Colby. ✤

ABBY MONSON



The Stevenson University Spectrum, A Literary & Arts Magazine, is published during the Spring Semester. Here are the guidelines for submissions for the Spring 2013 issue.

LITERARY

1. Essays, fiction, drama, and poetry are accepted for consideration for publication. Please limit prose to no more than 500 words.
2. Submissions of original, unpublished work from SU students, alumni, faculty and staff are welcome!
3. Each entry must be submitted electronically as an email or email attachment. All submissions should be accompanied by the contributor's name, email address, year in school, major, and permission to publish in Spectrum.
4. NO NAME should appear on any page of the manuscript.
5. A panel of students will judge all submissions anonymously.
6. Copyrights for work published in Spectrum will revert to the individual authors. (See Aaron Chandler, Advisor).
7. Send submissions by email to:
   Aaron Chandler, Professor of English,
   Spectrum Advisor
   achandler@stevenson.edu
8. DEADLINE: October 25, 2012.

ART

1. Two-Dimensional Artwork: including paintings, prints (such as collographs, woodcuts, linoleum cuts, silkscreened work and more), drawings, photographs and collages.
2. Three-Dimensional Artwork: including sculptures or relief sculptures in any medium. Unfortunately, we cannot accept 3-D artwork too large to fit on a tabletop.
3. Electronic Artwork: including computer-generated artwork created in software programs such as Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop.
   - Artwork created in raster-based software such as Photoshop should have a minimum DPI (dots-per-inch) of 300.
4. To submit visual artwork for publication in Spectrum, work must be submitted by the end of the Fall Semester.
   - 2-D and 3-D Artwork can be delivered to Amanda Hostalka, Professor of Art by the end of the Fall Semester. Please put your full name, your phone number and your email on the back of each piece or bottom of each sculpture.
   - By the end of the semester, electronic Artwork should be attached to an email sent to:

     Amanda Hostalka, Professor of Art
     ahostalka@stevenson.edu

     Be sure to include your name, phone number and email address in the message.
   - 2-D and 3-D artwork will be photographed, after which you'll be notified to pick up your artwork.
   - Copyrights for artwork published in Spectrum will revert to the individual artists.

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